

A NEW SPECIES OF *PTEROSTYLIS* FROM PORTLAND

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*P. celans*, n.sp.

*Planta parva gracilisque, circiter 9 cm alta, cum foliis basalibus 3-6, petiolatis, orbicularibus vel ovatis, circiter 15-20 mm longis. Caulis bracteae latae, 2, superior florem subtendens sed distans. Flos solitarius, viridis, in ovarium aliquanto robustum. Sepalum dorsale circiter 15 mm longum, erectum per  $\frac{3}{4}$  longitudinis, tum flexum ad apicem acutum et paululo decurrum. Sepala lateralibus erecta, ad petalorum bases adnata, et connata per 5 mm, tum divergentia et filiformia, super galeam extendentia, porro*

*curvata: sinus ad junctionem angustissimus. Petala non ad sepalum dorsale adnata, laticissima, circiter 12 mm longa, dimidium interius inflexum. Labellum fere lanceolatum, sed cum apice truncato inter rugas duas, circiter 11 mm longum, 3 mm latum, floris interiorum celans: lamina longitudinalis alba cum nervo medio viridi; appendix fere obsolete, a base 3 mm. Columna 7 mm longa, fere directa: alarum lobi superiores tereti, glandulosi, lobi inferiores aliquanto divergentes, 2 mm longi, infra cum marginibus breviter ciliatis. Stigma ovatum, magnum, latius quam columna.*



## KEY TO PLATE.

*Pterostylis celans*, n.sp.

1. Labellum, upper surface. 2. Column, side view. 3. Column, front view. 4. A petal. 5. Labellum from the side, to show appendage. ap. appendage. s. stigma.

form caudae extending above the galea and curved or hooked forward. Petals in all my specimens *entirely free* from the dorsal sepal for their whole length, about 12 mm long, nearly 4 mm wide at their broadest part, with a conspicuous median longitudinal nerve, on the inner side of which the petals are inflexed. Labellum almost lanceolate, but with a truncated apex between two minute marginal folds, about 11 mm long and 3 mm

wide at the broadest part; with the inflexed petals completely concealing the interior of the flower; thin and membranous. Longitudinal labellar plate white on both sides with a green median nerve; appendage almost obsolete, unbranched, about 3 mm above the base of the labellum. Column 7 mm long, nearly straight, upper wing-lobes terete, glandular-transparent near the tips, the lower lobes broad, scarcely meeting in front, shortly ciliate on the lower margins only. Stigma large and conspicuous, ovate, wider than the column.

Portland, Victoria, 10.1943 and 10.1944. G. Bennett and Mrs K Mellblom. Specimens of this curious little Greenhood orchid, discovered by G. Bennett in 1943, were sent to me by Mrs. Mellblom. Its most obvious affinity is with *P. nana* R.Br., of which I was at first inclined to think it a teratological form; this was also the opinion at the time of Mr. W. H. Nicholls. But further examination, and the fact that 15 specimens were found, all agreeing precisely in the peculiar character of the flower, convinced me that it could not be included in *P. nana*.

I am now glad that circumstances prevented its publication as a new species in 1943, because specimens of the 1944 season have been received from Mrs. Mellblom, and they are identical in all respects with those of the previous year, thus endorsing the right of the plant, in my opinion, to specific rank. The area upon which plants were discovered is unfortunately now being cleared for agricultural purposes, but Mr. Bennett has transplanted as many as possible to safer ground.

The outstanding peculiarity of the flower is provided by its remarkable membranous labellum, which might almost be described as petaloid. It does not appear to be irritable, and the appendage so characteristic of species of *Pterostylis* at the base of the labellum is almost obsolete, being represented by a single short "hair" of about 3 mm above the base. In *P. nana* the labellum is very much shorter than the column; it is thick and firm in texture, and has a branched appendage at the base. In the new species the labellum is at least 4 mm longer than the column. The petals also are remarkable. In all my specimens they are completely free from the dorsal sepal for their whole length. They are very broad, with a prominent median nerve, on the inner or anterior side of which the petal is inflexed. These inflexed halves of the petals, together with the long, wide, membranous labellum, completely conceal the whole interior of the flower, thus suggesting the name *P. celans*.

I confess that I cannot even hazard a guess at the purpose of this concealment. In every flower I examined, pollen was freely scattered on the stigma, proving that some pollinating agent had been at work. I do not think it possible for a *Pterostylis* flower to be self-fertilizing.

What is the agent in this case, and how does it go about its job? Here is a fine field for observation by our Portland friends, who are to be congratulated on the discovery of such an interesting species.

#### SCAVENGING BIRDS NEEDED

Corporal R. D. Kent writes from New Guinea: "There is a very noticeable lack of sea-birds and in consequence the beaches here are very dirty and 'high'."

Mr. D. J. Matfony, who retired recently from the position of Director of the National Museum, Melbourne, died on September 27. An obituary notice will appear later.